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Recognition and Property in Hegel and the Early Marx

by Andrew Chitty

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This article attempts to show, first, that for Hegel the role of property is to enable persons both to objectify their freedom and to properly express their recognition of each other as free, and second, that the Marx of 1844 uses fundamentally similar ideas in his exposition of communist society. For him the role of ‘true property’ is to enable individuals both to objectify their essential human powers and their individuality, and to express their recognition of each other as fellow human beings with needs, or their ‘human recognition’. Marx further uses these ideas to condemn the society of private property and market exchange as characterised by ‘estranged’ forms of property and recognition. He therefore uses a structure of ideas which Hegel had used to justify the institutions of private property and market exchange, in order to condemn those same institutions.

The concept of recognition

Let us begin with the concept of recognition (*Anerkennung*).¹ I shall say that for A to recognise B as X means

(1) for A to identify B as X, and

(2) thereby for A to be disposed to treat B as X

¹ Despite my differences, I am indebted in what follows to the discussion of the concept of recognition in Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007).

where A is an agent; B is an entity of any kind; to ‘identify’ B as X is to have a well-grounded conviction that B is X; X is some characteristic or status which is taken by A to have some positive value and so to call for a certain positive way of acting towards anything that possesses it; and to ‘treat’ B as X is to act in this way towards B. Thus, to recognise Mary as my sister is to identify her as my sister and thereby to be disposed, for example, to invite her to family occasions. To recognise a court’s ruling as authoritative is to identify it as authoritative and thereby to be disposed to act as it requires. Similarly one can recognise an individual as a good speaker, a team as the winner of a match, an animal as a sentient being, an argument as compelling, and so on.

Two comments are needed. First, recognition as defined here is recognition in a ‘practical’ sense, in that it includes a disposition to act. The English ‘to recognise’ can also be used in a merely cognitive sense in which it just means ‘to correctly identify as having a certain characteristic, or as being a particular individual’: for example, to recognise a bird as a swallow, or someone in the street as my former school teacher Mr Evans.² However the German *anerkennen* is not generally used to convey recognition in this merely cognitive sense, which accordingly I shall set to one side.³

² Of course merely cognitive recognition can also lead to a disposition to act positively towards its object, depending on the recogniser’s prior motivations. If I have a love of cats then identifying an animal as a cat will motivate, and so dispose, me to act in a friendly way towards it. However in the case of practical recognition my motivation, and so disposition, to act follows from my belief that the status or characteristic in question objectively ‘calls for’ or ‘demands’ a certain way of acting towards its possessors, and such a belief is distinct from any general liking or love of things with that status or characteristic. This is the force of the word ‘thereby’ in the definition. I forego a discussion of the theory of motivation needed to account for practical recognition.

³ For a discussion of the meanings of ‘recognise’ see Inwood (1992, 245) and for *anerkennen* see the relevant entry in Grimm and Grimm (1998-2010).

Second, the definition makes a disposition to act intrinsic to recognition, but not actual action.

Recognition is what we might call a ‘practical attitude’.⁴ Against this it may be argued that recognition is sometimes used in a sense in which it necessarily involves actual actions, as for example when someone’s colleagues recognise her for her achievements by presenting a gift to her. I acknowledge this point by distinguishing two kinds of recognition: ‘attitudinal recognition’ (recognition as it has been defined so far) and ‘express recognition’ (the performance of an overt act or utterance to express attitudinal recognition).⁵ In what follows I shall use ‘recognition’ to refer to attitudinal recognition.

Hegel on recognition and property

With this definition in hand we can turn to the connection between recognition and property in Hegel. My interpretative strategy will be to treat the *Philosophy of Right* not as a self-standing treatise but as an expanded version of the section on ‘Objective Spirit’ in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*. This section presupposes the development in the one before it, ‘Subjective Spirit’, in which Hegel argues that to be self-conscious is to be implicitly free (ES §424A), that self-conscious subjects are rationally compelled to recognise each other as free (ES §§424-36), that through such mutual recognition they establish a certain ‘identity’ with each other, and that thereby they become ‘truly free’:

[I]t is necessary that the two selves opposing each other should, in their *existence* [*Dasein*], in their *being-for-another*, posit themselves and recognize [*anerkennen*] themselves as what they are *in themselves* or according their concept, namely, not merely *natural* but rather *free* beings.

⁴ For a brief discussion of the idea of a practical attitude see Brudney (2010: 162).

⁵ Typically the act through which A expressly recognises B as X is simply that of treating B as X, as this is defined above. Express recognition needs to be distinguished from what could be called ‘performative recognition’, the performance of an overt act or utterance whereby an agent or organisation commits itself to treating B as X. For example: ‘The state of Utah recognised gold as legal tender in 2011’.

Only in this does *true* freedom come about; for since this consists in the identity of myself with the other, I am only truly free when the other is also free and is recognised by me as free. (ES §431A)⁶

From mutual recognition as free and the identity established by it Hegel immediately goes on to develop the idea of spirit. Spirit involves a conviction on the part of a plurality of mutually recognising subjects that at some level they are identical not only with each other but also with the world around them: ‘Spirit [...] possesses the confidence that in the world it will find its own self’ (ES §440A). As instances of spirit, subjects are rationally compelled to prove this identity between themselves and the world by discovering their own features in the physical world, and in so far as they do this they are instances of ‘theoretical spirit’ or ‘intelligence’ (ES §445). But they are also compelled to prove this identity by objectifying their own features in the world outside them, and in so far as they do this they are instances of ‘practical spirit’ or ‘will’ (ES §§468-9). Since their most essential feature as spirit is freedom (ES §382), this means that they are compelled to objectify their own freedom, so that ‘the absolute drive of free spirit [...] is that its freedom be an object to it’ (PR §27).⁷

For Hegel the means whereby subjects as instances of spirit can objectify, or as he also says ‘actualise’ or give an ‘existence’ [*Dasein*] to, their own freedom is by establishing the ‘system of right’, the system of modern social institutions described in the *Philosophy of Right*. So this system is ‘the realm of actualised freedom’ (PR §4; cf. ES §484), and right in general is ‘the existence [*Dasein*] of the free will’ (PR §29; cf. ES §486). Specifically, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel sets out a series

⁶ I have modified most translations of passages from Hegel and Marx.

⁷ Cf. Hegel’s separate attempt, in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, to show from the bare concept of a free will that possessors of such a will must will the objectification of their own freedom (PR §§9-21, 28).

of ‘stages in the development of the concept of freedom’ (PR §30), or successively more adequate conceptions of freedom, along with the institutions through which freedom under each of these conceptions can be objectified. Broadly, he begins with the most ‘immediate’ way in which a free subject can conceive itself and so its freedom. Here the subject sees itself as possessing a purely ‘individual will’ (PR §§34, 34A), so that any sense of itself as identical with others is as yet only implicit. Such a subject conceives itself as free only in the sense of being able to abstract from all its desires and characteristics and do what it chooses to independently of them. Hegel calls this subject a ‘person’ and its conception of freedom ‘abstract freedom’ (PR §35, ES §488).⁸

How can a person objectify its freedom? Hegel’s view is that initially it can only do so by embodying this freedom in some way in an objective thing outside itself. Thereby the thing becomes the person’s ‘property’ in the philosophical meaning which Hegel gives to the word: ‘the existence [*Dasein*] which [the person] gives to its freedom is property’ (ES §487; cf. PR §45R). Since for Hegel an essential character of persons is their freedom, he can also say that property is ‘the existence [*Dasein*] of personality’ (PR §51, ES §489), and since he equates possessing a will with being free (PR §4A), he can also say that property consists in ‘the circumstance that I, as free will, am objective to myself in what I possess’ (PR §45, cf. §§46, 46A).

Since my freedom as a person is my ability to do whatever I choose, to embody this freedom in an objective thing outside me must be to give the thing the status of being such that I can do whatever I choose *with* it, or as Hegel puts it to make it into ‘the external sphere of [my] freedom’ (ES §488, cf. PR §41). To do this I must, first, *will* that the thing have this status. In Hegel’s terms, I must will that the thing be ‘mine’, or ‘place my will’ in it (PR §§39, 58; ES §489). But second, I must make my will that I be able to do whatever I choose with the thing visible to others around me, by ‘taking

⁸ Hegel gives the term ‘abstract freedom’ a different sense at PR §§149, 336.

possession' of the thing, that is, by taking physical control of it ('seizing possession' of it), working on it, or marking it. Hegel makes this point by playing on the technical sense he gives to the word *Dasein* (existence), in which it means 'being for another':⁹

For property as the *existence* [*Dasein*] of personality my *inner* representation and will that something should be *mine* is not enough; rather this requires that I *seize possession* of it. The *existence* [*Dasein*] which my willing thereby acquires includes its discernibility [*Erkennbarkeit*]¹⁰ by others. (PR §51; cf. ES §491)

In fact the 'ultimate significance' of taking possession in all three of its forms is 'a sign, indeed one given to others, in order to exclude them and to show them that I have placed my will in the thing' (PR §58A; cf. ES §491). So the three forms of taking possession are ways not just of making visible to others, but of *declaring* to others, my will that I be able to do whatever I choose with the thing and thus that they not interfere with it themselves.

However this 'declared willing' that I be able to do whatever I choose with a thing is not yet sufficient to genuinely objectify my freedom in the thing, or to fully make it my property in Hegel's philosophical sense. For it is one thing for others to be aware of this willing, but another for those others to conform their own willing to it. It is only in so far as they do the latter, and so will not to interfere with the thing, that the thing really gains the status of something with which I can do anything I choose. This must be what Hegel has in mind by saying that for a thing to be fully my property, or for me to fully objectify my freedom in it, my will must exist for the *will*, as opposed to

⁹ See for example ES §341A, quoted above, and PR §71, quoted below.

¹⁰ Nisbet translates *Erkennbarkeit* as 'ability to be recognised', but this translation is correct only if 'recognised' is understood in the merely cognitive sense which we set aside in section 1 above.

simply the cognition, of the other:

Existence [*das Dasein*], as determinate being, is essentially being for another [...] Property, in that it is something that exists as an external thing, is for other external things and in the context of their necessity and contingency. But as the existence of the *will*, it is for another *only as for the will* of another person. This relation of will to will is the distinctive and true ground in which freedom has *existence*. This mediation, whereby I no longer have property by means of a thing and my subjective will, but also by means of another will, and thereby in a common will, constitutes the sphere of *contract*. (PR §71)

Here the idea of recognition enters Hegel's account of property. For to say that my will has an existence (*Dasein*) for the will of another is in effect to say that the other *recognises* my will in some way, as we have defined that term. Specifically, what Hegel must have in mind is not only that the other is aware of (or identifies) my will that I be able to do whatever I choose with a thing *as* such a will, but that the other thereby becomes disposed to act in accord with my will, or conforms its will to mine, so that the two wills form, as he says, a 'common will' with regard to the thing.

So Hegel has argued that I can only objectify my freedom as a person in a thing by establishing a relation with others in which I declare to them my will that I be able to do whatever I choose with the thing, and they are aware of my will and are thereby disposed to act in accord with it; or, as I shall put it from now on, in which I claim, and others recognise, the thing as 'mine'. Since to claim or recognise a thing as 'mine' (as such that I *can* do whatever I choose with it) is tantamount to claiming or recognising it as my property in the everyday sense of the term (as such that I am *entitled*, in some sense, to do whatever I choose with it), Hegel has in effect argued that I can make a thing my property in his philosophical sense only by claiming it, and getting it recognised by others, as my property in the everyday sense – and in fact as my private property, for Hegel takes it for granted that in so far as

a thing is ‘mine’ it cannot be ‘another’s’ (PR §§46, 50).¹¹

This immediately raises the question of why others should recognise as ‘mine’ the thing that I claim as ‘mine’, in other words why in virtue of being aware of my will that it be ‘mine’ they should conform their own will to this will. I may need others to do this in order for me to objectify my freedom, but why should they be interested in whether I objectify my freedom? Hegel’s answer must be that persons are from the start self-conscious subjects who have been rationally compelled to engage in mutual recognition as free, and to recognise each other as free includes being disposed to ‘treat’ each other as free. I suggest that for Hegel to treat another as free one must act in accord with the will of the other in so far as the content of that will is rationally necessitated by the other’s status as free. But as we have seen the status of being free gives rise with rational necessity to a will to objectify that freedom. So recognising another as free must include being disposed to act in accord with the other’s will to objectify its freedom. At the present stage, where self-conscious subjects conceive themselves as persons, or possessors of abstract freedom, the rational compulsion to recognise each other as free takes the form of a compulsion to recognise each other as persons, or as abstractly free. Hence the commandment ‘be a person and respect others as persons’, which Hegel introduces immediately after defining a person (PR §36). So this recognition will include a disposition to act in accord with the other’s rationally necessitated will to objectify its abstract freedom. But my claiming a thing as ‘mine’ is the expression of my rationally necessitated will to objectify my abstract freedom. Therefore in virtue of recognising me as a person others must recognise as ‘mine’ what I claim as ‘mine’.¹²

¹¹ For an alternative to the above reconstruction of Hegel’s concept of a person and his derivation of private property from it, see Schmidt am Busch (2008, 576-581).

¹² As Hegel says, others must recognise as ‘mine’ the thing that I take possession of because in taking possession ‘My will is a rational will, it is valid, and this validity should be recognised [*anerkannt*] by the other’

In fact Hegel goes further and implies that this is *all* they must do, for he asserts that when a person relates to another person they ‘have existence for each other only as property owners’ (PR §40), in other words that their recognition of each other as persons amounts to no more than a recognition of each other as property owners.¹³ So the disposition to action that is involved in recognising another as a person is simply the disposition to act in accordance with the will of the other when it claims things as ‘mine’, and nothing more.¹⁴

If this explains why for Hegel I am rationally compelled to claim, and why the other is rationally compelled to recognise, things as ‘mine’, it does not explain why Hegel immediately says in the

(PR §217A).

¹³ Here and below I understand ‘property owner’ in the everyday sense of the word ‘property’.

¹⁴ The starkness of this conclusion is softened by Hegel’s assertion that persons can claim as ‘mine’ not only external things but also their own bodies and abilities (PR §§47-48, 57, 67). Hegel is clearly influenced by Fichte’s *Foundations of Natural Right* in his derivation of property from mutual recognition as free. However Fichte’s own derivation is rather different. For him mutual recognition as free is bound up with a mutual ‘summons’ to be free which places the ground of each individual’s freedom at once in the other (as summoner) and in itself (as responding to the summons). To reconcile these the subjects must allot each other spheres of freedom, within which it is to be up to each subject to decide what to do, and must refrain from interfering with actions inside the other’s sphere (FNR 9/8, 15/15, 39-42/41-4). When one subject then forms an intention to act on a part of the sensible world to realise its ends, the other subject must include within the first subject’s sphere of non-interference whatever actions the first subject envisages carrying out, and so must refrain from disturbing this part of the sensible world, which is thereby constituted as the first subject’s ‘original’ or natural property (FNN 103-6/114-17). Hegel’s claims that a person must will that things be ‘mine’ in order to objectify its freedom, and that others must conform to this willing in virtue of its rationality, play no part in Fichte’s derivation.

passage quoted above that such recognition must involve ‘contract’, that is, the consensual transfer of the ownership of these things between myself and the other. In the passage he suggests that this is because the ‘common will’ with regard to the thing which is involved here can only exist in contract. However it is clearly possible for two persons to give the same content to their will (namely that one of them be able to do whatever it chooses with a thing and therefore that the other not interfere with it) without entering into a contract. What he must have in mind is that for a genuine common will to exist between two persons they must not only will the same content but *know* that they do, and only contract can provide this knowledge. In this case his argument must be as follows. For me to genuinely objectify my freedom in a thing, it is not enough for me to claim it, and for the other to (attitudinally) recognise it, as ‘mine’: I must further *know* that the other recognises it as ‘mine’. In so far as the other does not interfere with the thing, I can interpret this absence of interference as expressing such recognition on the part of the other, but I can also interpret it in other ways. For example, the other might not have interfered with the thing simply because of a lack of interest in it. For me to know that the other recognises the thing as ‘mine’, the other’s acts and non-acts must be such that I can *only* interpret them as expressing this recognition. This happens when (and only when) I enter into a contract with the other through which I consensually transfer the thing to the other. For then I must experience myself and the other as willing the transfer on the same terms, or as Hegel says as one in which ‘one willing comes to a decision only when the other is present’ (PR §74). So I must experience the other’s will as having the same content as mine with regard to the thing, and thus the other as recognising my claim to the thing. Therefore I must engage in contractual transfer of the things that I claim as ‘mine’ so that I can know that others recognise these things as mine, and hence so that I can genuinely objectify my freedom in them. Meanwhile others must participate in this contractual transfer in so far as they see my will to engage in it as an expression of my rationally necessitated will to objectify my abstract freedom, a will that they must be disposed to act in accord with by virtue of

recognising me as a person.¹⁵

Hegel says that ‘Contract presupposes that the parties entering it *recognise* [*anerkennen*] each other as persons and property owners’ (PR §71R), but on the present interpretation the relationship should be slightly restated. Contract does presuppose that each person entering it recognises the other as a property owner, i.e. that it recognises the things the other claims as ‘mine’. But in addition contract is the means whereby persons can express this recognition of each other as property owners to each other, and so make it a mutually known recognition. Since, as we have seen above, for Hegel recognising another as a person amounts to no more than recognising the other as a property owner, it follows that contract is more fundamentally the means whereby persons can express to each other their recognition of each other as *persons*, and make this too a mutually known recognition.¹⁶

To summarise, property and contract play two entangled roles for Hegel. First, they are together the means whereby members of a community of mutual recognition who see themselves as only abstractly free can objectify their freedom. Thereby such subjects can take a step in the process of overcoming the ontological divide between subject and object which is a central theme of the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*. Second, as part of this process contract in particular enables such subjects to

¹⁵ It should be mentioned that in some passages Hegel also appears to suggest that contract is necessary as the means whereby individuals, by alienating the things they own while retaining their status as owners, can objectify their freedom in a way that is not tied to particular things (see PR §71R, 73).

¹⁶ Patten (1999, 130-34) argues that for Hegel the practices of right in general provide the means whereby each individual can demonstrate to others both its freedom and its recognition of the other as free. However Patten sees this double demonstration as a psychological precondition for each individual to think of itself as free, and so to be free at all, whereas on the present interpretation the latter demonstration, in the case of contract at least, is rather the means whereby individuals can *objectify* their freedom.

express to each other their recognition of each other as property owners and so as persons. This enables them to form a known, and so genuine, 'common will' with respect to particular things, and so to begin to make explicit to themselves the implicit sense of an underlying identity of will between each other which is inherent in mutual recognition as such. In this way they can take a step in the process of overcoming the ontological divide between subject and *subject* which is a central theme of the *Philosophy of Right*. At a deep level the role of property and contract for Hegel is thus to overcome 'ontological estrangement', at once that between subjects and objects and that between subjects and other subjects, although of course for Hegel none of this is consciously present to the subjects who claim things as 'mine' (PR §45) and engage in contractual relations (PR §71R).

Marx on human recognition and true property

Although Hegel sees property and contract as objectifying freedom and expressing recognition, the conceptions of freedom and recognition involved are for him inadequate. In particular, in property and contract individuals are under no rational compulsion to respond to each other's needs. Rather their rational obligations abstract from such particular facts about each other. Hence Hegel calls the form of right to which property and contract belong 'abstract' or 'formal' right: 'In formal right, therefore, it is not a question of particular interests, of my benefit or welfare' (PR §37). Likewise, as he says in a marginal note, the recognition involved here, recognition of the other as a person and property owner, is 'for itself formal' (PR §72N). However in later parts of *Philosophy of Right* Hegel goes on to develop forms of right that involve obligations to attend to the needs of members of one's family (PR §§171), one's corporation (PR §252-255), and civil society as a whole (PR §§230, 238-242), so that the recognition of the other as a person and property owner is supplemented here by another kind of recognition: recognition of the other as a being with needs.

I shall argue that in 1844 Marx organises his opposition between present-day market society and the communist society of the future around a contrast between the first of these forms of recognition

and a universalised version of the second. In market society individuals recognise each other simply as property owners, but in communist society they will recognise each other as fellow human beings with needs.¹⁷ However, whereas Hegel's two forms of recognition supplement each other, occupying different spheres within the same system of right, Marx's are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, Marx introduces a notion of what he calls 'true' or 'human' property which is related to the recognition of others as fellow human beings with needs in the same way as property in Hegel is related to the recognition of others as persons and property owners.

The idea of the recognition of others as fellow human beings with needs is most explicit in Marx's description of the way in which individuals would produce for each other in a communist or 'human' society at the end of the *Comments on James Mill*:

Let us suppose that we had produced as human beings. Each of us would have *doubly affirmed* himself and the other in his production. (1) In my *production* I would have objectified my *individuality*, its *peculiarity*, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual *life-expression* during the activity, but also in seeing the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality as *objective*, *sensuously perceptible* and hence a power *beyond all doubt*. (2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would *immediately* have the enjoyment both of the consciousness of having satisfied a *human* need by my work, thus of having objectified the *human essence*, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another *human* being. (CJM 227-8/462)

We can call the way of producing for each other described here 'voluntary mutual production', for in it individuals do not need any extrinsic reward or sanction to motivate them to produce for others.

¹⁷ For a similar view see Quante (2011, 261-265).

Rather they do so just because they recognise each other as fellow human beings with needs, in the sense that they identify each other as such, and are thereby disposed to produce things so as to satisfy each other's needs and to make these things unconditionally available to each other. I call this kind of recognition 'human recognition'.¹⁸ Voluntary mutual production is simply the expression of it.¹⁹ Elsewhere Marx indicates the recognitive character of this production by calling it 'the human being's production for the human being as the human being' (CJM 225/459), and saying that in it human beings would 'relate to each other as human beings' (CJM 213/447; cf. 214/448).

The idea of 'true property' in Marx is more elusive. At various points in the 1844 writings he speaks of 'truly human and social property' (EPM 333/522), 'true, active property' (CJM 228/463), 'true personal property of the human being' (EPM 268/508) and 'true appropriation' (EPM 346/535; 348/536) as a central feature of communist society. Unfortunately he gives no full account of this property, but it is possible to piece together an understanding from his remarks.

In the nearest he comes to an explicit definition he says, 'The meaning of private property – freed from its estrangement – is the *existence [Dasein]* of *essential objects* for the human being, both as objects of enjoyment and as objects of activity' (EPM 322/563). If an 'essential object' is an object

¹⁸ In the above quote Marx also says that they are motivated to produce for others because they enjoy satisfying the needs of others, objectifying their individuality, and objectifying their essence as human beings, but these feelings of enjoyment can be seen as ultimately expressions of their practical attitudes of recognition towards each other. Brudney (2010, 159-163) also sees individuals as engaging in voluntary mutual production out of a practical attitude towards other human beings which underlies their occurrent feelings, although he characterises this attitude as one of 'concern' rather than recognition.

¹⁹ Cf. Brudney's description of production/consumption as the 'key social-recognition activity' of Marx's communist society (Brudney 2010, 173).

that corresponds to an essential human power, a power the possession of which is essential to being human, then the implication is that an object is my true property if I exercise my essential human powers through enjoying or acting on it. In so far as exercising these powers is in some sense ‘objectifying’ them in the object, we must then see the following passage as also referring to true property:

[I]t is only when in general objective reality [*Wirklichkeit*] becomes for the human being in society the reality of human essential powers, as human reality and therefore the reality of his *own* essential powers, that all *objects* become for him the *objectification* of himself, objects which confirm and actualise his individuality, *his* objects, that is, *he himself* becomes object.

(EPM 301/541)

So for Marx an object is my true property if I exercise my essential human powers through enjoying or acting on it, and thereby objectify those powers. At the same time in the above passage he identifies (without argument) these essential human powers with my ‘*own* essential powers’, powers the possession of which are essential to me being the particular individual I am, so that he can identify the objectification of my essential human powers with the objectification of my own individuality. Marx’s concept of ‘true property’ is therefore parallel to Hegel’s philosophical concept of my property as an object in which I objectify my freedom, even if the kind of ‘objectification’ involved looks rather different.²⁰

²⁰ Two supplementary points: First, I have assumed that the objects of true property are normally physical things, and have ignored those passages in which Marx speaks of ‘labour’, ‘human life’ or ‘the human essence’ as objects of true property (e.g. CJM 228/463, EPM 297/537, 299/539). Second, the concept of ‘true property’ needs to be distinguished from a notion of ‘inner property’ which Marx describes in a single passage in the *Comments on James Mill*. Speaking of two individuals engaged in the exchange of private property, he says that

Marx is clear that the enjoyment of, or activity on, the object that constitutes it as true property can take many forms. Speaking of ‘the positive supersession of private property’ he says:

All [the human being’s] human relations to the world – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, contemplating, sensing, wanting, acting, loving [...] are in their *objective* relating or in their *relating to the object* the appropriation of it. (EPM 299-300/539).

However in the case of producing the object it seems especially easy to say that I objectify my essential human powers and my individuality in it. In fact we can now see that the description of voluntary mutual production at the end of the *Comments on James Mill* implicitly incorporates the idea of true property as we have understood it here, for there Marx says that in the course of such production I would have ‘objectified the human essence’ and ‘objectified my individuality’ in the product (CJM 227-228/462, quoted above; cf. EPM 277/517).

If something becomes my true property in so far as I exercise my essential human and individual powers by enjoying or acting on it, then why does Marx think that true property comes about only in communist society? Why can I not exercise these powers by enjoying or acting on objects in a society of private property and market exchange, for example those objects which are my own private property? The answer to this question seems to lie in Marx’s view that humans are ‘species-beings’,

‘The desire for these two objects, i.e., the need for them, shows each of the property owners [that he is] a *total* being whose needs stand in the relationship of *inner* property to all products’ (CJM 218/452). To simplify, we could say that this ‘inner property’ stands to ‘true property’ in Marx in somewhat the same way as the primordial right a person has ‘to place his will in any thing’ (PR §44) stands to the property in things acquired by exercising that right in Hegel.

that is, beings whose essence is to engage in mutual production with others of their own kind.²¹ For if this is the case then each individual's essential human powers, the powers that the individual exercises in 'seeing, hearing, smelling' and so on in ways that are distinctively human, must be seen as powers that are in some way bound up with mutual production, perhaps in that they can only be exercised by enjoying or acting on objects produced by human beings for each other. As Marx says:

[N]ot only the five senses but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, *human* sense, the humanity of the senses, comes to be through the existence of its object, through *humanised* nature. (EPM 301-2/541)

For example, I can only exercise my own taste for music by listening to music, but music and musical instruments are things produced by other human beings. More generally, it is only through mutual production that humans produce the objects by enjoying and acting on which each can exercise his or her own essential powers. However for the Marx of 1844 mutual production is only *true* mutual production when it is voluntary mutual production, so that satisfying the needs of others is the final aim of the producers as well as the outcome of their actions.²² It follows that humans can only *truly* exercise their essential powers by engaging with objects that have been produced through voluntary mutual production. Marx implies this view of true property as requiring voluntary mutual production when he says that:

The supersession of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and attributes, but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have

²¹ On the concept of species-being see Chitty (1997; 2011).

²² This view pervades the *Comments on James Mill*: see especially CJM 219-20/454, 225-7/459-61. It is discussed further below.

become, subjectively as well as objectively, *human*. The eye has become a *human* eye, just as its *object* has become a social, *human* object, an object made by the human being for the human being [*vom Menschen für den Menschen herrührenden*]. (EPM 300/540)

For an object ‘made by the human being for the human being’ must here mean an object made by human beings simply with the motive of satisfying the needs of fellow human beings, thus as part of a system of voluntary mutual production.

Objects that are ‘true property’, then, must be produced as part of a community of voluntary mutual production, which in turn is the expression of mutual human recognition. But conversely individuals can express their human recognition of each other to each other only by voluntary mutual production, and in producing for each other in this way they will be exercising their essential human powers, and so will constitute their products as their true property. So it is only by producing things as true property and transferring these things to each other that individuals can express to each other their human recognition of each other. Marx intimates this claim in both the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and *The Holy Family*:²³

We have seen how, assuming the positive supersession of private property [...] the object, which is the direct activation of his individuality, is at the same time his existence [*Dasein*] for other human beings, their existence and their existence for him. (EPM 297-298/537-538)

[T]he *object as being* [*Sein*] for man, as the *objective being of man*, is at the same time the *existence* [*Dasein*] of man for other men, his human relation to other men, the *social relating of*

²³ At least he does so if we understand an individual’s ‘existence [*Dasein*] for’ another in these two passages as the individual’s expressed recognition of the other.

True property, as the objectification of essential human and individual powers in things, overcomes the divide between humans and nature. Likewise human recognition, as expressed in voluntary mutual production, overcomes the divide between humans themselves. Like Hegel's property and contract, they overcome estrangement. Hence Marx can see the society of true property and human recognition as 'the true resolution of the conflict between the human being and nature, and between the human being and the human being' (EPM 296/536; cf. 298/538).

In contrast to voluntary mutual production, Marx understands the modern market economy as based on a way of producing for each other that we can call 'private mutual production'. Just as voluntary mutual production is production that expresses individuals' recognition of each other as fellow human beings with needs, so private mutual production is production that expresses their recognition of each other as private property owners. Here things are produced *as* private property, and so are transferred to each other through 'private exchange', that is, through exchange in which I give you something that I own only on condition that you give me something that you own (and that I want) (CJM 217-21/452-5, 224-7/458-62).²⁴

In that individuals recognise each other simply as private property owners, they are disposed to refrain from interfering with each other's property, but to ignore everything else about each other, and in particular to ignore each other's needs. Unless you have something to offer in return for my private property in a private exchange, your need for it does not move me: as far as I am concerned 'your demand is no more than an ungratified desire' (CJM 226/461). Thus we do not recognise each other as fellow human beings with needs: 'As human beings, we are not present [*vorhanden*] as far as our

²⁴ For a helpful analysis of these passages, see Quante (2011, 251-261).

reciprocal productions are concerned' (CJM 225/459). In that what we in fact are is needy human beings rather than property owners, this is an 'estranged' form of recognition.

Similarly, for Marx private property is an estranged form of property. In that individuals produce things as private property they do in a certain sense objectify themselves in those things. However they do not objectify their human essence and their own individuality, but rather only their own status as private property owners. Therefore they do not objectify what in fact they are in the thing: '*private property* is only the perceptible expression of the fact that the human being becomes *objective* for himself and at the same time becomes to himself an alien and inhuman object' (EPM 299/539). Hence private property is property that suffers from 'estrangement' (EPM 322/563).²⁵

In fact for Marx in private mutual production the activity of production itself is estranged. We said above that for Marx mutual production is only *true* mutual production when satisfying the needs of others is the final aim of the producers as well as the outcome of their actions. By contrast in private mutual production individuals' final aim is only to satisfy their own needs, through producing something as private property which they can use through private exchange to acquire items of private property similarly produced by others. In such production 'I have produced for myself and not for you, just as you have produced for yourself and not for me' (CJM 225/459). The final aim of the producers comes apart from the outcome of their actions, or as Marx says the 'purpose' of their productive activity and its 'existence' are different from each other (CJM 220/454). Therefore we can see this as an 'estranged' form of productive activity.²⁶

The system of private mutual production is thus for Marx estranged through and through. It

²⁵ See also the contrasts between true property and private property at EPM 299-300/539-40.

²⁶ Cf. Marx's account of 'estranged labour' at EPM 270-282/510-522.

involves an estranged form of recognition, an estranged form of property, and an estranged form of productive activity itself. Thereby it also estranges human beings from their products and from each other. Whereas for Hegel private property and mutual recognition as property owners overcome our estrangement from nature and from each other, for Marx they create it.

Conclusion: Hegel vs. Marx

To summarise, in sketching his philosophical account of communist society in 1844 Marx relies on Hegel's accounts of recognition, property and contract, but systematically transforms them. For Hegel's recognition of the other as a property owner and as a person, grounded in the rational compulsions of a self-conscious subject, he substitutes recognition of the other as a fellow human being with needs, grounded perhaps in the nature of a human as a species-being. For Hegel's property as the objectification of the person's freedom he substitutes 'true property' as the objectification of the individual's essential human powers and individuality. Where for Hegel persons express their recognition of each other as persons by transferring things as private property to each other through contract, for Marx humans express their human recognition of each other through producing things as true property and transferring these things to each other unconditionally.

At the same time, while Hegel uses his concepts of property and recognition to reveal the rationality of private property and market exchange, Marx uses his own to ground his conception of communist society, and as a standard by which to criticise private property and the recognition characteristic of market exchange as estranged, and estranging, versions of true property and human recognition. In this way he uses a fundamentally Hegelian framework of thought to come to conclusions opposite to Hegel's about the acceptability of these institutions.

The aims of this article have been exegetical.²⁷ However I conclude with one evaluative comment. Marx is surely right to criticise a conception of recognition which is limited to recognising others as property owners, and his own 1844 notion of recognition of others as fellow human beings with needs is infinitely more generous. It also breaks new ground in combining the universal scope of Hegel's recognition of others as persons with the focus on the needs of the other that characterises Hegel's recognition of fellow members of one's family, corporation or civil society.²⁸ But this notion, indebted as it is to Hegel's concept of recognising others as persons, remains as tied as Hegel's is to physical things. Marx's human beings, like Hegel's persons, can express their recognition of each other only through the medium of things,. His assertion that in communism the object, as item of true property, is 'the *existence of man for other men*, his human relation to other men' mirrors Hegel's assertion that persons 'only have existence for each other as property owners' (HF 43/44, PR §40, both quoted above). The result is that the communist society of the early Marx is in its own way vulnerable to the charge he later implicitly lays against capitalism: that in it human relations are exclusively mediated by things (C1 165-166/87). For just as humans surely have a multiplicity of needs that go beyond those satisfiable by things, so the recognition of others as fellow human beings with needs must have a

²⁷ In addition, I have focused exclusively on the Marx of 1844 and have not addressed the question of how far the ideas of human recognition and true property survive in Marx's later writings. In the *German Ideology* of 1845-46 Marx and Engels harshly repudiate the idea of 'true property' embraced at the time by other German socialists such as Moses Hess (GI 469/457), but the idea that communism will establish a new kind of property recurs in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* (e.g. G 832/716, C 929/791; for a discussion see Arthur 2002, 114, 123-7). Meanwhile the idea of 'human recognition' arguably also survives in the later writings, most obviously in Marx's description of communist society as inscribing on its banners 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' (CGP 87/21).

²⁸ This combination makes it difficult to fit into any of Honneth's three basic types of recognition: love, legal recognition and social esteem (Honneth 1995, 92-130).

multiplicity of expressions beyond producing things for them. Hegel of course can respond to a parallel criticism of his notion of recognition of persons as property owners by theorising supplementary kinds of recognition beyond it, but Marx is apparently unwilling to take this route. If Marx's aim is to envisage a single 'human recognition' to supplant the various types of recognition theorised by Hegel, then a surprising conclusion is that, for all its apparently utopian character, his early conception of this recognition is not yet radical enough.

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